

REMARKS

By this amendment, claims 1-19 and 35-48 are canceled, claims 23 and 31 are amended, and new claims 36-44 are added. Support for new claims 36-44 is found, for example, at page 12, line 28 to page 14, line 7, and page 19, line 3 to page 20, line 20 of the application.

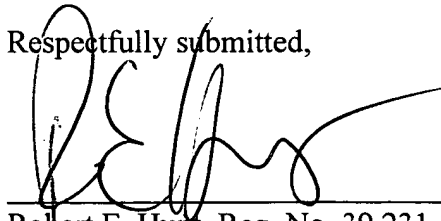
I. Election of Group IV

The Office Action requires an election of claims from Groups I through IX. The correspondence of claims to each of the identified Groups is detailed at page 2 of the Office Action. Applicant hereby elects to prosecute Group IV corresponding to claims 20-30. New claims 36-44 also correspond to Group IV since claims 36-43 depend from claim 20 and claim 44 recites a gel extrusion apparatus like that in claim 22 in means-plus-function form. In addition, Applicant submits that new claim 44 is a linking claim that links the claims of elected Group IV with the claims of Group V (claims 31-34). Claim 44 is a means-plus-function claim reciting means for performing each of the steps of method claim 31. Thus, claim 44 links the apparatus and method claims in Groups IV and V. See MPEP 809.03 Accordingly, upon allowance of claim 44 in Group IV, Applicant expects a withdrawal of the restriction requirement between the claims in Groups IV and V and consideration of claims 31-34 on the merits.

CONCLUSION

If this response is not considered timely filed and if a request for an extension of time is otherwise absent, Applicant hereby requests any necessary extension of time. If there is a fee occasioned by this response, including an extension fee, that is not covered by an enclosed check, please charge any deficiency to Deposit Account No. 23/2825.

Respectfully submitted,



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